

Urges President to Ensure Journalists' Access for Full, Accurate Account

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell today wrote to President Obama this morning urging him to increase access for journalists to cover events in and around the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Below is the text of the letter.

June 10, 2010

VIA FACSIMILE

The Honorable Barack Obama

President

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am troubled by a report in today's *New York Times* about journalists being denied access to cover events in and around the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. [See:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/us/10access.html?hp>

]

Among other things, the article alleges that a pilot was denied the ability to take a photographer for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* to the gulf to document oil slicks. It also alleges that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security denied a U.S. Senator's request to bring journalists on his recent trip through the gulf on a Coast Guard vessel, despite having already obtained agreement from the Coast Guard to accommodate the journalists.

Obviously safety must be the number one priority, and clearly no one wants emergency operations to be impeded. However, if the Administration has the ability to accommodate journalists in places as dangerous and chaotic as Iraq and Afghanistan, I fail to understand how it is that journalists cannot be accommodated here at home.

The public has a right to know what is going on in the gulf, and this can only happen if journalists are free to cover events as they happen.

I urge you to find ways to improve press access.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Mitchell

Member of Congress

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